

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LILONGWE 000452

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, CA/OCS/ACS (ROBINSON), AF/S,
AF/EX

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM MI](#)

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE BRIEFLY FLARES FOLLOWING ELECTIONS

REF: (A) LILONGWE 00449

(B) LILONGWE 00439

(C) LILONGWE 00438

1. (U) SUMMARY: SCATTERED VIOLENCE LINKED TO LAST WEEK'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS OCCURRED THROUGHOUT MALAWI FROM 22-24 MAY; AS YET UNCONFIRMED REPORTS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT UP TO THREE FATALITIES MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN BLANTYRE DURING THESE DISTURBANCES, WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE RUN THEIR COURSE FOR NOW. LILONGWE REMAINED QUIET THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD, AND NO USG EMPLOYEES, PRIVATE AMCITS, USG FACILITIES, AMERICAN NGOS OR AMERICAN CORPORATE ENTITIES ANYWHERE IN MALAWI HAVE REPORTED BEING TARGETED OR SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY THIS FLARE-UP OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) DETAILS:

A. SCATTERED VIOLENCE LINKED TO LAST WEEK'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS OCCURRED IN BLANTYRE, MZUZU AND ELSEWHERE IN MALAWI FROM 22-24 MAY, FOR REASONS PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED IN REFTELS. THE WORST OF THIS VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN BLANTYRE, WHERE SOME SHOPS AND ROADS WERE CLOSED ON MONDAY, 24 MAY. (RSO COMMENT: SOME OF THESE CLOSURES WERE ALSO PARTIALLY PROMPTED BY THE INAUGURATION OF MALAWI'S NEW PRESIDENT, WHICH ALSO TOOK PLACE IN BLANTYRE ON 24 MAY AND WAS ATTENDED BY VARIOUS REGIONAL HEADS-OF-STATE. END COMMENT.)

B. AS YET UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OBTAINED BY EMBASSY LILONGWE SEEM TO INDICATE THAT UP TO THREE FATALITIES MAY HAVE OCCURRED DURING THE DISTURBANCES IN BLANTYRE; WHILE THERE IS A HEAVY POLICE PRESENCE ON THE STREETS OF THAT CITY TODAY (TUESDAY, 25 MAY) THERE HAVE BEEN NO ADDITIONAL REPORTS OF VIOLENCE THERE OR ELSEWHERE IN MALAWI, AND IT APPEARS THAT THIS POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAS RUN ITS COURSE FOR NOW. (RSO COMMENT: TWO REPORTS WE ARE AWARE OF CLAIM THAT ONE OF THE FATALITIES WAS A MALAWI POLICE SERVICE CONSTABLE, BUT SENIOR POLICE SOURCES IN LILONGWE HAVE UNOFFICIALLY DENIED THAT ANY POLICE OFFICERS WERE KILLED WHILE RESTORING ORDER ANYWHERE IN MALAWI; THESE SAME POLICE OFFICERS HAVE HOWEVER UNOFFICIALLY CONFIRMED THAT ONE OF THE REPORTED FATALITIES WAS A RIOTER, WHO WAS SHOT BY THE POLICE IN BLANTYRE. AT THIS TIME WE HAVE NO FURTHER DETAILS ON WHETHER THIS USE OF LETHAL FORCE BY THE POLICE ACTUALLY OCCURRED, OR WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING IT MAY HAVE BEEN. END COMMENTS.)

C. LILONGWE REMAINED QUIET THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD DESCRIBED ABOVE AND NO USG EMPLOYEES, PRIVATE AMCITS, USG FACILITIES, AMERICAN NGOS OR AMERICAN CORPORATE ENTITIES ANYWHERE IN MALAWI REPORTED BEING TARGETED OR AFFECTED BY THIS POLITICAL VIOLENCE. ADDITIONALLY, NO PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ARE CURRENTLY OFF-LIMITS TO USDH EMPLOYEES, AND PRIVATE AMCITS ARE NOT BEING ADVISED TO AVOID ANY PARTICULAR LOCATIONS IN MALAWI EITHER. (RSO COMMENT: ONE USDH MISSION EMPLOYEE LIVES AND WORKS IN BLANTYRE; HE HAS BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR AND HAS REPORTED THAT THE FLARE-UP OF VIOLENCE IN THAT CITY DID NOT AFFECT HIM, HIS OFFICE OR HIS LOCALLY ENGAGED STAFF IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY. END COMMENT.)

3. (SBU) RSO COMMENTS:

A. LILONGWE IS CURRENTLY RATED AS A MEDIUM POLITICAL VIOLENCE THREAT POST. THE RECENT POLITICAL VIOLENCE DESCRIBED ABOVE IS IN LINE WITH THAT THREAT RATING AND IS NOT ATYPICAL FOR THIS COUNTRY.

B. POST IS AWARE OF STORIES PAINTING A FAR GRIMMER PICTURE OF POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE WHICH HAVE BEEN PICKED UP AND REPEATED BY VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL PRESS AGENCIES. AT THIS TIME WE CANNOT/NOT CONFIRM ANY OF THESE STORIES AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN POSSIBLE EXAMPLES OF SLOPPY REPORTING AND/OR POOR FACT-CHECKING.

C. THE MALAWI POLICE SERVICE, WHILE GENERALLY WELL INTENTIONED, IS UNDER FUNDED, UNDER STAFFED, POORLY TRAINED AND VERY POORLY EQUIPPED; IN PARTICULAR THEY LACK SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF MODERN RIOT-CONTROL GEAR, AND ARE NOT PARTICULARLY WELL TRAINED IN USING THE GEAR THAT THEY DO HAVE. IT IS THEREFORE ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT A CONSTABLE MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED WHILE TRYING TO RESTORE ORDER IN BLANTYRE, AND/OR THAT THE POLICE UTILIZED LETHAL FORCE WHILE

DOING SO THERE AS WELL. END COMMENTS.

14. (U) PLANS: POST'S POLITICAL SECTION, CONSULAR SECTION AND REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE ARE CONTINUING TO UTILIZE ALL AVAILABLE SOURCES TO DETERMINE AND CONFIRM WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED ON THE STREET IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MAY 20 ELECTIONS, AND WILL ADVISE ONCE WE HAVE SOLID INFORMATION ON SAME AND/OR IF THE SECURITY SITUATION HERE SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGES.

DOUGHERTY